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Vermont Superior Court declines to restore Mead's name to the Middlebury Chapel

By HUGO ZHANG
Online Editor

Vermont Superior Court Judge Robert A. Mello ruled against the Mead estate on Oct. 3, 2024, deciding that it would not be entitled to restore the original name of the chapel or receive monetary compensation for the name's removal. The lawsuit began 18 months ago when Jim Douglas '72, former Vermont governor and Middlebury's executive-in-residence, sued the college on behalf of the Mead family for removing the name of John Abner Mead from the Middlebury Chapel.

While most of the main issues have been decided, the court has allowed the litigation to continue in part to decide whether the original agreement was a gift or a contract. If it was a contract, then the court will allow proceedings to determine if "covenant of good faith and fair dealing" has been violated.

"The unjust enrichment claim has no merit. Because the transaction still could be determined to be a contract, the court cannot determine as a matter of law that there can be no claim on the covenant of good faith and fair dealing," the court wrote.

The ruling also denied Middlebury's renewed motion to dismiss on the grounds that it was now moot. Middlebury's motion for summary judgment remains only granted in part, and not in full.

A spokesperson for the college shared that the ruling demonstrated the lack of evidence for the plaintiff's arguments, adding the college's legal team continue to work towards fully resolving the case.

"The Court's decision affirms that there were no viable legal bases for the primary goals of the Mead Estate in bringing this lawsuit (either returning to the original name of the Chapel or returning the gift funds)," the spokesperson wrote in an email to The Campus. "The College's attorneys are evaluating the next steps to fully resolve the few remaining issues and move this case toward a close."

As special administrator of the Estate of Governor John Mead, Douglas admitted that this ruling is not the intention the plaintiff side was hoping for.

"We were disappointed that the Court declined to compel the College to restore the Mead family name to the Chapel, concluding that a century is long enough; that seems quite arbitrary &, at the very least, a decision for a jury," Douglas wrote in an email to The Campus.

Douglas said that the Mead estate believes that this decision of the court allows them to ask a jury to determine whether there was a contract between Mead and the college or if the sum of money used to build the chapel was a gift.

"We believe that it was a contract, as there were numerous requirements on both parties," he wrote. "If we're able to present that question to a jury, it would be logical to ask the panel whether the name should be restored."

Douglas added that he believes the college should restore the name "Mead Memorial Chapel"

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ARMSTRONG LIBRARY TO CLOSE BY JANUARY AS NEW QUANTITATIVE CENTER OPENS

DAVID ZHAO / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The new Q-Center has created a lively atmosphere on the main floor of Armstrong Library.

By RACHELLE TALBERT
Contributing Writer

For students who frequent BiHall, it is hardly a secret that changes are happening to the Armstrong Science Library space this fall. The library's main floor — now an extension of the Center for Teaching, Learning and Research (CTRL) called the Armstrong Quantitative Center or "Q-Center" — has transformed from the quiet, bookish atmosphere it harbored just last spring. The same space is now packed with students gathering to discuss their work around subject-specific tables and whiteboards, ready to jump into their next chemistry equation or physics problem.

The current Armstrong Library — which provides curriculum and research support in the fields of biology, chemistry and biochemistry, computer science, environmental studies, geography, geology, physics and psychology — will close by this coming January, according to Amy Morsman, professor of History and interim director of the CTLR. The shelves on the ground floor of the library will be removed and replaced with a quiet space for study carrels, and the main floor will remain the Q-Center. Armstrong's current materials will be distributed in Davis Family Library's collection or placed in external storage.

The decision to remove Armstrong was due to a low level of circulating materials and the high quantity of resources that students access exclusively from online databases, according to Morsman.

"I think a lot of people now, faculty now, they have journal articles and stuff that they want their students to read, they're in databases that tuition dollars pay for, they're in textbooks that they're getting, so it's not like the stuff that's coming out of Armstrong will be thrown away," Morsman said.

The Q-Center is an extension of the CTRL and is a space chiefly

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Bridport resident charged with D.U.I. after hitting student on College Street

By PHOEBE AN
Contributing Writer

A Middlebury College student was struck by a vehicle on Sept. 26, 2024, leading to the arrest of Bridport, Vt. resident Jordyn Walker, 26, for driving under the influence and operating a motor vehicle on a public highway in a negligent manner. Concerns about pedestrian safety on campus have prompted safety warnings from the college's Department of Public Safety this fall, including public signs at crosswalks around campus warning passersby to look up and wait for cars to stop.

At 10:13 p.m. that night, Middlebury Regional Emergency Medical Services (MREMS) notified Middlebury's Department

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BLACK STUDIES PROGRAM CELEBRATES FIVE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

By CAROLINE JIAO
News Editor

On Friday, Oct. 18, a dinner celebration hosted by the Black Student Union (BSU) at Coltrane Lounge welcomed the Black Studies Program as well as many interested students and returning alumni to gather and commemorate the department's fifth year anniversary. More than 30 people showed up to the event.

The Black Studies Program was approved by the administration in May 2019, but the major did not start running with courses listed until spring 2021. That year, there was one student majoring in the program and two interested students. As of now, the program has 13 majors and 11 minors.

President of BSU Che DeFreitas '27 explained that the opportunity to host the event came up naturally.

"From what I can remember, we needed an event for this month, and as we were planning, we realized it was the Black Studies Department's fifth year anniversary. So we're like, 'We have to do something!'" he said.

DeFreitas was delighted to have hosted the celebration for people to enjoy and commemorate the moment.

COURTESY PHOTO / VINCENT JONES II

Professor Emeritus of History and Black Studies William Hart gave a speech about the history of Black studies before the dinner celebration ensued.

"We really just needed to host something like this, show up, and celebrate this, because this is a milestone and it needs to be preserved and seen," he added.

Professor Emeritus of History and Black Studies Bill Hart, who gave a short speech at the beginning of the event, was one of the first faculty members to promote the major. He noted that students have demanded the addition of Black Studies courses and the major for a long time.

"Students have been asking for Black Studies for decades," he said. "But it took a few critical moments for the administration to come around to authorizing that."

Jerry Philogene, associate professor and program director of Black Studies, acknowledged the progress the department achieved in the short span of five years. Since the department's establishment, it has acquired funding for two tenure track positions as well as two senior positions, one of which is held by Philogene and the other

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MULTIMEDIA

A day in the Adirondacks: Middlebury Mountain Club hosts inaugural 46 Peaks Day
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Black Studies program celebrates five-year anniversary

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is open for hire.

"I think my colleagues have done an amazing job in creating, maintaining and sustaining the department. Having two tenure track positions in a newly formed department is an amazing accomplishment," she said. "I'm excited to have Professor Davis and Professor Huang with us."

Assistant Professor of Black Studies Khyree Davis emphasized the multitudes of the Black Studies Department with its unique scholarly approaches.

"As a department and a program, we've got a lot going on. We've grown our major, which is really interesting, and our students are really engaged in some fascinating projects. For instance, Crystal Zhou ['23.5], who graduated just last winter and was my major advisee, we did work together looking at black Vermont farming, and it resulted in a 70-plus page magazine," Davis said, adding that the final product is now included in the department's courses.

Viola Huang, assistant professor of Black Studies, relayed a recent trip to a conference she had taken with a Black Studies student who researched the Black Lives Matter movement in Germany.

"She already presented her research in our class and the spring student symposium, but we were just at the German Studies Association in Atlanta, Georgia three weeks ago, presenting our research at a scholarly conference," Huang said.

Huang also acknowledged the deep engagement with the department by students on campus hailing from a wide variety of academic backgrounds and experiences.

"We have so many students from across the campus. We don't just teach our majors, but so many students from Econ, from STEM, from the languages, they all bring Black Studies back to their departments," she said. "You can see Black Studies all around campus."

As a Black Studies and Economics double major, DeFreitas echoed Huang's statement, adding that he enjoys doing both fields at the same time.

"I really like it. It's my pleasure major. It's very fulfilling for me. I actually got into it almost accidentally, when I was just registering for classes as a first year," DeFreitas said.

DeFreitas also appreciates the various learning methods the department encourages within its scope of study in addition to the traditional academic training, and the sense of belonging that was formed while engaging in collective learning.

"I took Black Thought, which is the theory class, last spring. For the final project, we all had to come together in groups, and we had to make board games," he said. "I enjoyed that this department allows creativity in it. There's also so much community, especially among the majors. Granted, there's not that many of us, but still it's nice to have a classroom where everybody is majoring in the same thing."

When asked about the changes in the department throughout its five-year growth, Philogene noted that its reach has increased, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

"It's gotten bigger!" she said. "We now just need space to take all of that!"

Hart drew attention to the many interdisciplinary courses that now stretch across departments within the scope of Black Studies.

"Because it's a program, it means it's interdisciplinary, so it draws on courses from across the curriculum. So the first year I think we had a dozen courses representing about six disciplines," he said.

Philogene echoed the cross-departmental composition of the Black Studies course catalog.

"We have the core courses that we teach, but we also have seven cross-listed courses from a variety of departments because faculties want to have that connection with Black Studies. So I think that's really important," Philogene said.

Black Studies has drawn many resources from courses offered in the other departments, and vice versa. Huang now has classes cross-listed with Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies as well as German, and Davis with the Geography Department. Philogene will soon add one more to the list by cross-listing a course with the History of Art and Architecture department.

Davis highlighted how this reflects the inherently expansive approach of Black Studies itself, in that it demands students to approach issues in the field with a broad mind with the support of a strong faculty group.

"I think it's important that we're not just interdisciplinary. We have people situated in Black Studies doing the work out of that. It's important for our students to tackle the field directly too, " Davis said.

In a rapidly changing world, many are re-evaluating the idea and importance of a liberal arts education. In response to a demand to redefine and reshape academia, Philogene believes Black Studies has great potential in drawing ideas and fields of studies together.

"I refute this idea that Black Studies is only the study of Black people. I think that's a limiting and essentialist idea. I think what Black Studies does is it prioritizes the history of people, but in a relationship to the world," she said. "It's about an epistemology, it's about a way of knowing and a way of thinking, and I think everybody needs that."

Tying the matter back to the emerging Black Studies departments across college campuses, Davis noted the deeply intertwined effort from various sides.

"Looking at the history we all know here, it's been Black students who have been involved in the struggle for Black Studies, but it's also been other students as well. It's been a cross-racial coalition for Black Studies and other forms of ethnic studies on campus since they first came up in the 1960s," he said.

Huang agreed that the idea of Black Studies emerges from a complex history with roots in prolonged human conflict.

"When we think about the history of Black Studies, we should keep in mind that Black Studies emerged out of a struggle. I feel we are in a moment where there will be struggle, and there is struggle, so I think Black Studies is so essential to have at this moment," she said.

COURTESY PHOTO / VINCENT JONES II

ARMSTRONG LIBRARY TO CLOSE BY JANUARY AS NEW QUANTITATIVE CENTER OPENS

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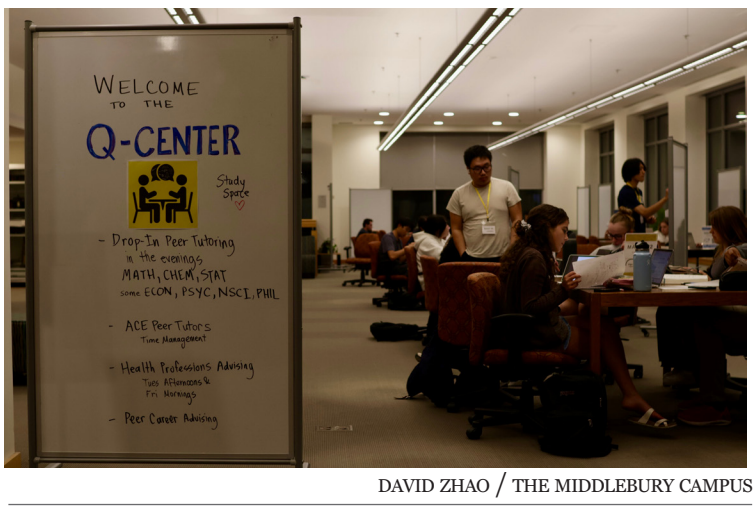
designed to strengthen academic support for all levels of quantitative areas, according to Morsman. The hope is to create a designated space for tutors and teaching assistants focused on STEM and quantitative topics to meet with students seeking help outside of class, as well as for faculty who choose to host office hours.

Though Armstrong will be changing its function this year, some aspects will remain the same. Sean O'Neil, the supervisor at Armstrong for 14 years, made it clear that the space on the lower floor will continue to serve as a quiet study space below the collaborative Q-Center.

"Armstrong has always been known as a study space for the campus, and it's one of the quietest spots in BiHall," O'Neil said, and that he plans to keep it that way. "We've relocated all the study carrels downstairs, while the upper floor now features an open format. We will still have public printing and poster printing here."

Ideas for the Q-Center came about when faculty and staff considered how the space occupied by Armstrong could better be put to use. Given the challenges faced by students who experienced restricted learning opportunities in high school during Covid-19, many of them have expressed concern about their lack of solid backgrounds in math and other STEM-related subjects. This space is designed to try and fill those learning gaps, according to Morsman. She added that the new space is donor-funded, adding that the college has several donors interested in supporting Middlebury students who may feel vulnerable in quantitative areas.

"We want to normalize help seeking. We want to have workshops


WELCOME
TO THE
Q-CENTER
Study Space
- Drop-In Peer Tutoring in the evenings MATH, CHEM, STAT some ECON, PSYC, NSCI, PHIL
- ACE Peer Tutors Time Management
- Health Professions Advising Tues Afternoons & Fri Mornings
- Peer Career Advising

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that are above and beyond just like 'oh you're struggling in Chem 103,'" Morsman explained. "Let's have a workshop on how to build graphs in Excel! How many people could benefit from that? A ton!"

The faculty who use the Q-Center hope to foster a supportive academic environment where asking for help in quantitative disciplines is normalized, according to Interim Director of the Q-Center and Professor of Mathematics and Statistics Emily Malcolm-White. White is currently working to reimagine Armstrong as a center for academic collaboration and community-building.

Though the space is conveniently placed for STEM students, the Q-Center is intended for a range of people at the college. With hours open for tutoring in scientific, statistical, and psychological courses, the Q-Center is rapidly expanding to also include general career advising. Peer Career Advisors with the Center for Careers and Internships (CCI) will host drop-in hours in the space to assist with resumes, cover letters and interview preparation for STEM students.

"It's exciting to see a lot of these things come together in one space where students can access multiple resources at one time," Malcolm-White wrote in an email to The Campus.

With the space opening just next to the new first year dorm, Malcolm-White said she hopes the Q-Center will act as a magnet for new students who are trying to find their footing.

"Things that are beyond course-specific needs, that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to get a buzz. We're trying to say, 'Come into this place,'" Morsman said.

The transformation into the Q-Center has been a work in progress. Students, staff and faculty alike have directed the Q-Center's growth. Malcolm-White acknowledges the efforts of Vice President of Academic Affairs Jeremey Ward for getting the center off the ground.

"We're building the plane as we launch it — as we take off," Morsman said.

Guided by the question of how to help Middlebury students better self-assess, learn and integrate quantitative skills into their lives, the Q-Center is already off the ground and rising higher.

Editor's Note: Managing Editor Madeleine Kaptein '25.5 contributed reporting to this article.

Bridport resident charged with D.U.I. after hitting student on College Street

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of Public Safety that ambulances were being dispatched to College Street in response to a man struck by a vehicle.

"Two of our officers were immediately dispatched to the scene of the accident, later followed by a sergeant while the team also verified that the Middlebury Police Department (MPD) was aware of the incident," wrote Associate Vice President of Safety Demetria Kirby in an email to The Campus.

When Public Safety arrived at the scene, MPD was already assisting the injured man, who was identified as a student at the college. Public Safety officers helped paramedics to the location of the accident to begin medical treatment and started gathering witness statements, according to Kirby. The student, not in critical condition, was transported to nearby Porter Hospital. Walker, who was driving the vehicle, was taken into custody by law enforcement.

MPD Sergeant Casey Covey stated in an affidavit that the student sustained injuries to his left leg and ankle from the collision. Additionally, two student witnesses estimated Walker's vehicle was driving approximately 40 to 50 miles per hour and saw the student fly through the air, according to MPD records. Statements from Walker and a handprint on the windshield confirm that the student hit the vehicle's windshield.

After Covey smelled alcohol on Walker and noticed empty alcohol cans in the pocket of the front passenger seat, Walker admitted to consuming alcohol at two nearby establishments prior to operating the vehicle. Covey then conducted a Standardized Field Sobriety Test and a preliminary breath test, to which Walker consented and that showed a result of 0.157 percent blood alcohol concentration (BAC). As Walker's results were higher than Vermont's BAC limit of 0.08 percent, Covey arrested her for driving under the influence.

This is Jordyn Walker's second offense after a prior D.U.I. during a one-car crash in Shoreham, Vt. on Feb. 24, 2021, according to the Addison Independent crime log. Walker's hearing date in the College Street case is set for Jan. 13, 2025.

Before the accident, Public Safety had already begun efforts to encourage crosswalk safety, according to Kirby. Public Safety sent an email to the college community on Wednesday, Oct. 23 containing safety advice for when walking, jogging or biking, especially around railroads.

"Stop at the crosswalk and wait until there are no vehicles approaching. Look at the driver once they've stopped and seek eye contact. Wave to the driver before you cross the road," Kirby wrote in the community email. Signs at each of the crosswalks on College Street also serve as similar reminders to pedestrians crossing the road there.

"Pedestrian safety is a priority at Middlebury, especially because we have several well-traveled roads intersecting our campus," Kirby wrote to The Campus. "We posted signs about safety at crosswalks last year and the decision to post signs at crosswalks again was made before this unfortunate incident although this incident certainly brings attention to the need for them."

Please, BE SAFE! BE SEEN!
STOP
Stop at the crosswalk and wait until there are no vehicles approaching.
LOOK
Seek eye contact with the driver when they have stopped.
WAVE
Wave to the driver before you cross the road.

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The Department of Public Safety recently posted lawn signs on College Street urging students to be cautious.

TALKING TRASH: FOOD WASTE BEYOND THE DISH CAROUSEL

By MAGGIE BRYAN
Senior News Editor

Welcome to Talking Trash, a new series uncovering the hidden journey of post-consumer waste at Middlebury. From food scraps and compost to recyclables and landfill-bound trash, we'll trace the path of discarded waste after it leaves the hands of our community, revealing the impact of our waste habits and the systems managing them.

At lunch, Middlebury's dining halls buzz with activity as students hurriedly stop by for a quick bite before dashing off to their next commitment. Thursday, Sept. 19 was no exception. A group of Environmental Studies senior practicum students rushed through their meals after class ended at 12:15 p.m. to make it to the Howard Woodin Colloquium by 12:40 p.m. Among them was Professor of Economics and Environmental Studies Jon Isham, who, around 12:36 p.m., had not finished the green beans that lay on his plate.

"And now, I'm going to do something I don't normally like to do," Isham said, and proceeded to take his plate of unfinished food to the dish carousel, sending it to the abyss.

As an infrequent patron of Middlebury dining halls and a scholar of environmental economics, Isham was understandably disturbed by the idea of wasting food. Yet anyone who routinely dines in any of the college's three dining halls knows that clean plates on the dish carousel are a rarity.

"I've never had a clean plate at Middlebury," Tulip Larson '25 said over a plate of unfinished grapefruit slices a few weeks later in Proctor. "There's always something I get that I don't like, or can't finish."

On any given day, dining hall visitors waste the equivalent of hundreds of meals, making Isham's green beans and Larson's grapefruit peels merely a drop in the bucket. According to Dining Services Manager Brent Simons, the most recent "Weigh the Waste" report, which Dining Services calculates in partnership with students, found that on April 22, 2022, students in Ross Dining Hall generated 354.2 pounds of food waste. For context, the average person eats about three pounds of food a day.

Numbers like these corroborate the quantities of waste that dining hall staff witness each day. Although no new report has been conducted on food waste specifically, Executive Director of Food Service Operations Dan Detora told The Campus that he has not noticed any increases or decreases in the college's food waste over the past decade.

For Detora and Simons, food waste is not only financially inconvenient, it is personally upsetting.

"Obviously we expect some food waste. However, when you see and hear food banks and food shelves literally begging for donations it is quite troubling. In addition, just the effort put forth by our employees on a daily basis and then to see it discarded [is troubling]," Simons wrote in an email to The Campus.

For Detora and Simons, the lack of control over post-consumer waste worries them the most. Though Dining Services can take steps to reduce pre-consumer waste like being more mindful of expiration dates and using special cutting techniques to minimize scraps, student habits are harder to change.

"The biggest concern for me is the student waste because I really have no control over it. Overproduction from my staff can be easily adjusted, but I can't control how much a student takes from the food line and then wastes it," Detora wrote in an email to The Campus.

Middlebury students' tendencies to waste food reflect broader trends — the world throws away about a third of its food, which is the equivalent of 1.3 billion tons or 1 trillion U.S. dollars. The impact of that waste on the environment and our climate is significant; in the U.S. alone, food waste accounts for about six to eight percent of all carbon emissions, or the equivalent of 32.6 million cars.

At Middlebury, almost all food waste is composted. In the dish room, a food pulper churns and grinds the leftovers, which dining hall staff dump in one of several bins outside the dining halls.

PHOTOS BY JUNE SU / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Each day, members of the Facilities Services team drive to each of the dining halls to pick up the waste and take it to the compost site between the golf course and South Street.

The "stump dump," as Kim Bickham and Doug Smith of Facilities Services call it, is a paved area that holds several piles for different stages of the compost cycle. The remnants of food, utensils and the occasional beer can in the piles serve as a direct reflection of Middlebury students' consumption habits. Although Facilities do their best to sort out non-compostable waste before it enters the compost pile, Smith described that contamination is an inevitable part of the process.

Middlebury's compost weighed in at 608,096 pounds for the entire year of 2023, which comprised 26.2% of Middlebury's total waste, according to Bickham. The compost during the months of May, June and December, when students are on breaks, yielded the least compost — May's waste weighed 30,360 pounds, less than half of that of June, which weighed 64,928 pounds, suggesting that student food waste in dining halls and dorms comprises the bulk of the compost site's weight.

Composting is a practical activity for the hundreds of thousands of pounds of food waste that Middlebury generates; all of the college's compost is used on-site by the grounds team, according to Bickham and Smith. Although composting is less environmentally harmful than the alternative of leaving food to rot in landfills, it still releases enormous amounts of methane, a gas that decreases air quality and contributes to environmental degradation in several other ways. On a systemic level, composting cements overconsumption as part of the food supply chain and fails to address the problem at its root, which, according to Professor of Food Studies Molly Anderson, is overproduction and overconsumption of food on all scales.

"A big part of it is that the United States encourages overproduction. We have a really big problem with overproduction of most crops, and there are all sorts of incentives for farms to get bigger and to be producing more and for the productivity on farms to go up," Anderson said in an interview with The Campus.

On a local scale, Anderson said that Middlebury students seem to have internalized an abundance mindset, which is often the reason they over-serve themselves.

"A lot of students at Middlebury have grown up with plenty of food, and they never thought about food being scarce. They don't have a good sense of the value of food, and how precious it really is. So if they take extra food and end up throwing out half of it, it just doesn't hit them that this is an incredible waste,'" Anderson said.

Dining halls are a unique environment because restrictions and incentives for limiting waste that some other countries implement –– for instance, South Korea charging citizens for food waste by weight or parents offering dessert as a reward for a clean plate –– are not possible. While broader shifts to our food system may eventually minimize food waste as a part of our culture, immediate shifts on a college level hinge on individual responsibility. Thus the answer to this collective action problem begins with recognition of waste and a mindfulness of personal contributions to a broader problem, according to Anderson.

Instead of emphasizing the evils of wasting food, Anderson said that awareness should be built around the value of food as a resource, and the importance of conserving it, for environmental, social and economic reasons.

Editor's Note: Tulip Larson '25 is an Arts & Culture Editor for The Campus.

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regardless of the outcome of legal proceedings.

In terms of Governor Mead's controversial actions — notably his farewell address to the Vermont legislature, which shared his support to pro-eugenics legislation — Douglas acknowledged that Mead's ideas are unacceptable today but were mainstream and clearly embraced by Middlebury at his time a century ago.

"In fact, the College taught mandatory courses on eugenics topics for more than half a century," he said. "It was a eugenics factory."

Since the removal of Mead's name from the chapel's title, critics have expressed their discontent with the college's lack of transparency when making the decision. Douglas shared his concern about the prevalence of political correctness in academia, which might prevent deep discussions on controversial topics such as eugenics in this case.

"What should disturb everyone at a liberal arts college is that [Mead] was punished not for anything he did, but for something he said," Douglas wrote. "In theory, that's the purpose of an institution of higher education: to expose students to views that are unpopular, even offensive."

In an email to The Campus, the spokesperson for the college emphasized Middlebury's continued commitment to free expression and open exchange.

"The college has and will remain committed to exercising the fundamental right of freedom of expression and open debate on our campus and welcomes all voices on this issue," the college wrote.

The court will continue to weigh the narrowed scope of the Mead lawsuit in the coming months. The final outcome will depend on future appeals and rulings: Douglas has stated that the Mead estate will appeal the ruling to the Vermont Supreme Court and is waiting for permission to do so from the Vermont Superior Court.

SKILES ROBERTS-SALVADOR / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

MARK PRUHENSKI TO BECOME MIDDLEBURY TOWN MANAGER IN JANUARY 2025

By LILY JENSEN
Contributing Writer

The town of Middlebury announced on Oct. 10, 2024 that Mark Pruhenski will enter into the role of town manager on Jan. 15 of next year, replacing former town manager Kathleen Ramsay, who stepped down last month.

The town manager plays an important role in managing a number of municipal issues and components, including traffic, safety, housing and infrastructure. Pruhenski described the daily activities and responsibilities of a town manager in an interview with The Campus.

"A town manager is responsible for the day-to-day management of a city or town, for the supervision of department heads and town staff, and for drafting and managing the town's annual operating and capital budgets," he said.

In Middlebury, there are seven members of the Selectboard who each serve a three-year term. Town residents can run for a selectboard seat in March and are elected through a voting process. Middlebury's town manager is not elected, but rather appointed by this elected board and has no fixed term limit. The Selectboard conducted three rounds of interviews with representatives from Middlebury College and town department heads to decide on the top candidate for the position. Even though the elected board is responsible for the official town manager search, the community's opinion is taken into account during the board's considerations.

Pruhenski has worked in municipal government for 20 years, currently as the top municipal administrator for Great Barrington in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, where he is in charge of 14 different departments and over 100 employees. Pruhenski has also managed two other towns in Massachusetts: Waitley and Richmond. Beginning as the public health director in Great Barrington, Pruhenski worked his way up the ladder in town government, which allowed him to spend 10 years serving the town in a variety of ways, from being an animal control officer to serving on the fire department.

He has also co-owned two different coffee shops, one of which was in Middlebury.

"I feel so much better prepared for this role," Pruhenski said. "I just loved it right away. I loved being able to impact my community in a really significant way. And, local government is so different from state and federal government, because most of the services that residents receive are coming from your local government."

Purhenski noted that his biggest accomplishment while serving in Great Barrington has been keeping the town community connected during the Covid-19 pandemic. He worked on projects such as the Berkshire Busk outdoor street festival in collaboration with a local Great Barrington group, a rainbow crosswalk program to promote inclusivity and funding several housing development projects.

During the interview process for the position, Pruhenski observed Selectboard meetings.

"I was so impressed with how open-minded the board was, how well they listened," he said.

Tom Hanley, the current interim town manager and former Middlebury police chief, remarked that Pruhenski was chosen for his "clear vision" for the town of Middlebury.

Hanley said that Middlebury and Great Barrington have a lot in common, referring to the towns as mirror images of each other. Pruhenski agreed with this sentiment that the two towns have a similar positionality supporting adjacent rural communities.

"We're also the economic hub for anyone around us who is looking for shopping, eating, entertainment, banking, gasoline, things like that," he explained in reference to Great Barrington. "We're host to a number of our neighboring communities."

Even though a small college — Bard College at Simon's Rock — is located in Great Barrington, Middlebury College is a much more prominent presence in the town of Middlebury than Bard is in Great Barrington. Middlebury and Great Barrington both struggle with infrastructure, although Pruhenski added that such challenges are not unique to either town. From visiting and watching Vermont, Purhenksi has noticed significant improvements to capital development in the area that he hopes to continue.

Ever since leaving Middlebury, Pruhenski has been determined to find his way back."You can be in a coffee shop at 9 a.m. with a friend and be out on a hiking trail 20 minutes later," Pruhenski said of living in the town. "It's perfectly sized to my mind. It has access to everything that I would want in life personally."

When Pruhenski gets to Middlebury in January, first on his to-do list is to observe the town and get to know the culture.

Middlebury's town culture is a diverse one, with industrial workers, artists, Pulitzer-Prize winners and farmers among the ranks of town residents. In addition to individuals, local organizations, nonprofits, the town offices and community spaces also contribute to the town culture. Pruhenski is excited to explore all of these different elements of Middlebury and finds it essential to foster relationships with these culture-building forces.

After coming out of retirement to assume the role of interim town manager, Hanley said that he is doing everything he can to prepare for the new manager, such as preparing the town budget, so that Pruhenski can experience a smooth transition into his new role.

Pruhenski is always ready for a challenge or a new chapter. Whether that is the multi-day process of baking sourdough bread in his kitchen or leaving his hometown to manage a new town, he is committed to doing what he loves. In 2025, with this spirit and courage, he will be ready to dive right in.

COURTESY PHOTO / MARK PRUHENSKI
Mark Pruhenski will step into the role as Middlebury's town manager in January 2025.

Middlebury Acting Company showcases Chekhov with The Cherry Orchard

By HARRY WILSON
Contributing Writer

The Middlebury Acting Company's cast — composed entirely of local Vermonters — took the stage on Friday, Oct. 19 for their opening night of Anton Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard. The Cherry Orchard will be performed at the Middlebury Town Hall Theater again this weekend from Oct. 25–2.

The blend of this talented cast with the work of one of Russia's greatest classic playwrights offers a timeless artistic experience for both Middlebury students and locals, according to Director Melissa Lourie.

"If you're going to come to a play at town hall theater, this is the one to see," Lourie said.

The Cherry Orchard, published in 1903, is Chekhov's final work, and its themes still resonate strongly with modern audiences.

The play "speaks to any human being who has ever been alive and struggled with all the issues that come with that," Lourie added.

The play follows a Russian aristocratic family facing the decline of their wealth. At its core, it explores the characters' internal and external conflicts as they grapple with the desire to preserve their beautiful cherry orchard while confronting the inevitable changes that life brings.

Lourie told The Campus that she has long cherished The Cherry Orchard, having performed in it during graduate school. "I felt it was time for me to do it," she added.

Lourie's adaptation of the play is crafted to be accessible for audiences while remaining faithful to Chekhov's original work. Chekhov's works are renowned for their grounded presentation and realistic dialogues. Characters often engage in everyday conversation about trivial matters, but the true depth of his plays lies in the subtext behind what characters say and how it relates to their feelings and relationships with others in the play.

"If people are unfamiliar with Chekhov, they should come and see what he is because he's really special," Lourie said.

Students from a Middlebury beginning theater class were invited to attend the final dress rehearsal before opening night. Jane Zhang '28 enjoyed seeing the play because she appreciated the different creative choices in set design that brought the audience closer to the performance.

"The nursery is on the same level as the audience members. The actors sometimes join the stage from the two entrances we entered, hinting that the characters are actual living people, bringing us into their story," Zhang said.

Lourie emphasized the crucial role the cast plays in the success of this project. The actors embody each character down to the smallest detail, telling stories of love, heartache and class differences. The raw emotion and tension between the characters is on full display as the family inches closer and closer to financial disaster. Audience members can feel the frustration of trying to reason with someone who won't listen, as well as the sadness of clinging to the past while everything around them changes.

"I wouldn't do Chekhov unless I could get these actors," Lourie said.

COURTESY PHOTOS / MELISSA LOURIE
The Middlebury Acting Company will be performing The Cherry Orchard at the Town Hall Theater from October 23-25.

MADE IN VERMONT: BEAU TIES ISN'T JUST FOR SHOW

By NOOR KHAN
Layout Editor

Beau Ties of Vermont is tucked away on a quiet road off Route 7 a couple miles out of Middlebury, where it originally served as a store for ties. Over the last 31 years, however, the small company has expanded its selection to include both men's and women's accessories, offering customers everything from cravats and shawls to tote bags.

"Generally, a lot of people haven't even heard of the company. But once they know, they're like 'Oh, I have to send so-and-so over, they always wear bow ties,'" said Nikki Quesnel, co-manager of the store.

Beau Ties' focus is producing a high quality product that is customizable to every customer. Every product is made to order on-site, and every customer can make the product their own.

Many customers will use this option to imbue individual significance on their accessories. Touches like wedding date monograms or initials are common, but sometimes Beau Ties receives orders with more personal stories.

"We've had people come in and say that their father died and he only wore neckties, but they wear bow ties, and we'll make them all into bow ties," Quesnel said.

"Someone once sent us his mother's favorite dress and we made ties out of her dress," added Susan Heinkoff, the other co-manager of the store. "That's one of the great parts about being a custom shop."

Customers can send in any fabric they might come across — even, as Heinkoff recalled, brand new boxer shorts — because every product created by Beau Ties is handmade using sewing machines.

"A lot of companies do die cuts so that they can cut multiple items at a time. I'm standing here literally cutting one piece at a time for our ties. Even if I [stack fabric] in layers, it's still handmade," Heinkoff said.

This process means that the production team works very closely together, as each product is passed from person to person through the necessary steps.

NOOR KHAN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

"We try to keep a culture of teamwork, which sounds cliché, but it's really not, in our company. Because we're so small, people wear a lot of different hats," said company owner Greg Shugar.

Shugar, a Florida resident, purchased Beau Ties in 2019. He travels to Vermont every four to six weeks, relying on a business strategy that requires a lot of trust between not only him and the team but amongst the team itself.

"They push back on me when they need to, and that's great. I told them on day one, 'I'm not the king around here. I don't know everything. I'm going to be wrong, and I'm going to say things you might not like, and you need to tell me those things.' So we keep that culture," Shugar said.

Heinkoff described the company as having a fun, laid-back atmosphere, something immediately evident to anyone who enters the production room. Jokes and conversations are heard being thrown between the different stations, and there is always a dog or two around.

"They call us Ernie and Bert because we're the troublemakers around here," joked one store employee Carol Martin, pointing to the tape on the floor by both her and fellow employee Karen Marshall's workstations that are labeled with their respective names.

"Most of us have been together long enough that I see them more often than I see my siblings," Quesnel said, adding that she had just spent the weekend together with Heinkoff outside of work.

None of this would be possible without the individual passion of each staff member for their work. Many of them will make suggestions about how to improve and grow the company, and Shugar said that several of the products are the "brainchildren" of his employees, such as the kippahs and women's products that they now make.

"For me, what stands out is that they're homemade and that we really care about what we put out," employee Valerie Mayhew, another long-time member of the store now in her 27th year of working at Beau Ties.

"We're made in Vermont, [by] local Vermonters. I think it's a fun thing to come see in person the production room, see how a bow tie is made and look at the things we sell," Shugar said. "We just sell so many products now, and there's something for everyone."

NOOR KHAN / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

"Bert and Ernie" at work. Left to right: Carol Martin has worked at Beau Ties for 9 years, and Karen Marshall for 29.

OUR INVESTMENTS ARE KILLING PALESTINIANS. WE MUST DIVEST.

Op-Ed

Joshua Glucksman *is a member of the class of 2024.5,* ***Merih Etgu*** *is a member of the class of 2026 and* ***Phoebe An*** *is a member of the class of 2027.*

They are members of the divestment campaign by Middlebury Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP).

Since the beginning of October, Israel has invaded Lebanon, killing 2,367 and wounding 11,088, overseen the one year anniversary of its genocide in Gaza whose death toll likely soars above 100,000, and begun the ongoing siege of northern Gaza described by one United Nations envoy as "a genocide within a genocide."

Last spring, the college committed to financial transparency and to begin talking towards codifying divestment from arms manufacturing as a result of the Gaza Solidarity Encampment. This coincided with a landslide Student Government Association (SGA) referendum showing 90% student support for endowment transparency and 80% for divestment from arms manufacturing and war profiteering.

It is under these circumstances that four students presented to the Board of Trustees' Resources Committee and the Middlebury College Board of Advisors yesterday afternoon. SJP demanded that the Resource Committee bring a vote to begin divestment with a list of 45 companies flagged under "Weapons and Military Equipment" by the Nobel Peace Prize-winning American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Simultaneously, we called to codify this divestment with Middlebury's contracted investment firm Investure to ensure no future investments in companies profiting from war.

Unfortunately, Middlebury remains complicit in the devastation of the Middle East through their investments in companies that profit off of death. The college's announcement last May titled "A Commitment to Common Educational Values" stated: "Middlebury is not invested in arms or arms manufacturers," but we believe this is a lie. In fact, 1.1% of our endowment's roughly $1.6 billion is invested in the AFSC-flagged companies. That is approximately $18 million. This deception comes down to methodology: 'arms manufacturing' is not a category in the major industry taxonomies. For example, General Electric is one of the largest weapons companies in the world, but the company's division that takes on military contracts is classified as 'aerospace.'

Despite this, in hopes that a shorter list would prompt swifter action, the negotiators agreed to work with a list of 25 companies as a sign of good faith. These companies are the highest priority for divestment actions using the AFSC's evaluation point system. However, even with this reduction, the Board refused to take further action, prompting negotiators to return to the list of 45 companies. With their lack of action, the Board of Trustees continues to allow their financial power to invest in companies whose products continue to annihilate the Palestinian people.

How can we reconcile that the college's mission statement purports to "foster the inquiry, equity, and agency necessary for [students] to practice ethical citizenship" with their refusal to engage in concrete action towards divestment backed by the vast majority of students? It is very clear that our values must come before profit: after all, the endowment's very purpose is "to provide sustainable financial support for Middlebury to service its mission." An education funded by genocide is anathema to the practice of ethical citizenship. How can we first focus on fixing the world's problems when injustice exists right here, on our own campus? The answer right now is that we, as the entire student body, can hold the Board accountable to divest from war.

Part of this support requires understanding the Boycott, Divestment, Sanction (BDS) movement. The Palestinian-created movement is a non-violent tactic endorsed by 170 Palestinian civil society bodies, based on the success of similar efforts during the struggle against South African apartheid, a regime that Middlebury activists successfully led divestment from in 1986. It has been a dynamic part of the Palestinian liberation struggle for almost two decades, and has gone through many campaigns, including the current encampment-related focus on endowments.

We know from the legacy of divestment at Middlebury that change does not happen overnight, but that the process must nevertheless commence. For example, Middlebury's commitment to divestment from fossil fuels will take 15 years, but this divestment is an investment in Middlebury's future. Similarly, divestment from war profiteering will ensure that we do not profit from any future civilian death, environmental destruction or annihilation of universities as is happening in Gaza. Middlebury must secure a legacy that is not funded by a continual cycle of violence.

Valid concerns about divestment and its impact on the financial state of students and staff are important to our intersectional struggles as a community. Divesting our endowment should never come at the cost of wages nor financial aid. We know this concern is real, with 45.5% of respondents to Middlebury's Staff Council survey finding it necessary to find a second source of income to make ends meet. However, this is a reflection of a deeper issue with the college, as even when refusing divestment in the name of prioritizing profit, our institution still fails to pay its laborers a liveable wage. Thus, the fight for divestment from war should not be conflated with Middlebury's far deeper problem of devaluing academic and non-academic labor.

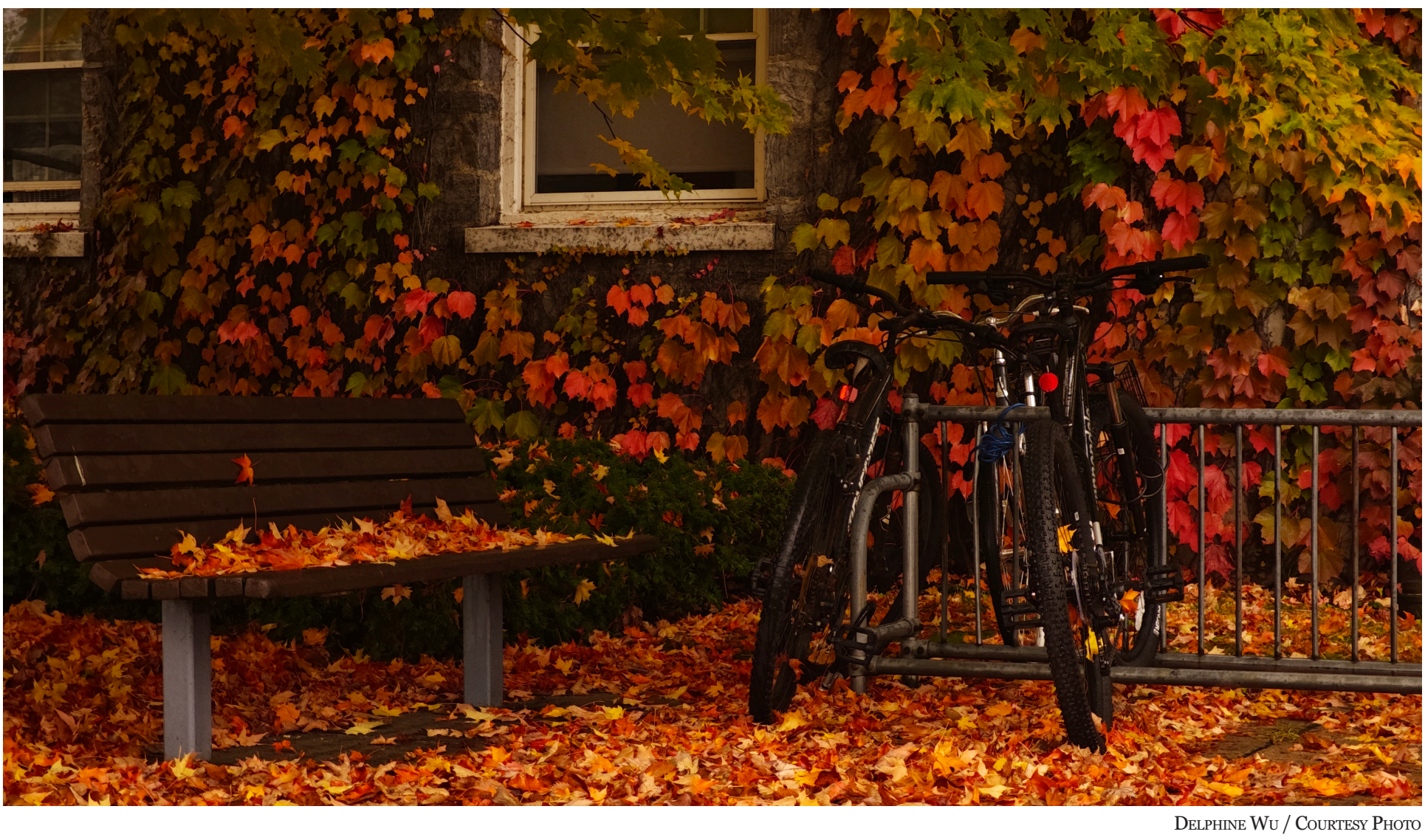
In divestment debates now and throughout history, common concerns voice that if one does not buy a stock, someone else will. We urge you to consider that the point of a global divestment movement is not solely financial, as some of the main benefits of divestment are raising public consciousness so that moral actors divesting from stocks far outweigh immoral ones. Do not be tricked by moral apathy, or the nihilistic logic akin to the Israeli telling the Palestinian, "if I don't steal [your home] someone else will." As an elite educational institution, our influence is one link in a chain of the global movement, as has been the case with collegiate divestments from South Africa, Tobacco, Sudan and most recently fossil fuels.

As we write, the Israeli aid blockade of Gaza continues. Northern Gaza is encircled by occupation forces who have cut all internet and telecommunications. They are incinerating wounded children in hospital tents, gunning down those who leave their shelters in search of food and ethnically cleansing Jabalia. We are presently faced with a serious question about the kind of world we will accept living in. As children, many of us were told "you are the future" and "you are going to change the world." We are children no longer; the future is now. As students of the humanities, we ask: is this compatible with any definition of humanity?

Kana DeCoste / The Middlebury Campus

PHOTO OF THE WEEK:
Autumn Biking and Benching by Battel

Delphine Wu '28 photographed a picturesque scene outside of Battel Hall this week. While branches and leaves abundantly sprawl Battel's exterior all year round, the building's vegetation is especially compelling in the fall, when its colorful leaves shed and adorn fixtures of every day enjoyment for Middlebury students, such as relaxing benches and their treasured bikes.



Delphine Wu / Courtesy Photo

NOTIFYING YOU ANYWAYS: HOW MIDDLEBURY STUDENTS CAN CUT THE CORD

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

As our school and communities across the country consider the use of cell phones and laptops in academic settings, we chose to reflect on what policies the college may implement to mitigate the distractions screens pose, both in and outside of the classroom.

We know all too well the temptation of pulling out a laptop to check emails during lectures or scrolling on Instagram while we should really be doing a problem set. You know what we're talking about: Go into any class here and you'll likely find students online shopping, playing The New York Times mini-games, deleting emails, texting their parents, checking fantasy football stats, sending break-up texts, receiving break-up texts — the opportunities online are endless.

All this does nothing to help our own learning at Middlebury — something we pay a significant amount of money each year to do — and it often distracts other students in the class. We must remember that a Middlebury education is a privilege; attending class is not just a 75 minute intermission from our social lives, but it is the main reason we all spend four years here. Consider ways of reconfiguring your relationship to technology, especially in class, to be one of serious intentionality. Think hard about how you are using your technology, and evaluate whether or not to use your device if it would detract, rather than collaborate with or reinforce, the learning environment curated for you in the classroom.

Of course, laptop computers are very helpful devices when it comes to enhancing and democratizing the learning environment. They are useful places for taking and storing large quantities of notes; means of accessing online readings and assignments; and, as is the case in computer science and data science courses, essential to the class itself. We acknowledge that in some ways, our portable devices have made learning and studying in college more convenient, accessible and ultimately more modern.

As of right now, there is no college-wide policy regarding screens. Many professors have already implemented screen bans in their classrooms, with certain ADA accommodations as exceptions. A school-wide ban on screens would be largely unproductive, given how some students using screens under disability accommodations in otherwise screenless classrooms may already feel isolated and scrutinized as the only student in a class typing. Additionally, online readings on Canvas make texts more accessible, as students often no longer have to purchase textbooks or waste excess paper to complete their readings.

In many ways, technology has been a huge benefit to learning and connections that are only possible online. For example, there are plenty of mutual aid networks that operate exclusively through apps like Instagram and Venmo. The readily accessible nature of these social media platforms certainly increases the efficacy of these efforts.

But what does a healthy and functional relationship with our screens actually look like, especially within the context of the college experience? It's important to remember that having a cell phone is a very recent development for college students in the broader history of university life. Though we may have had a hard time imagining it, scores of Panthers past successfully coordinated group meals, found their friends on weekends and gathered to work on group projects without the instant access to communication granted by being able to text, call or track each other's location.

We imagine that campus life may be more fulfilling if we weren't so attached to our phones. There could be more spontaneity, more meals with people we don't know, more stopping by someone's room unannounced, more sitting around staring off into space until someone comes around we want to talk to, more conversations in the empty space before a class. So many options for connection and presence of mind become available to us when we put down our phones and prioritize in-person relationships.

Classes would certainly be more fulfilling without all the distractions from our laptops. A classroom of people with nothing to do but listen and think sounds far more engaging than a classroom of people scrolling through social media and shopping online. We understand this in theory, but it is hard for any of us to disconnect fully from our online lives.

Still, we are not without agency. Our time in college, living in a walkable community of people our age and attending classes all day, is a remarkable privilege. We invite you to think about how creating more distance from your screens might allow you to be more present in this rare space.

Next time you go to pull up the Wordle three minutes after sitting down for a lecture, think about what a rare and lucky thing it is that you are actually in a classroom when, for what may be the last time in your life, you are asked to do nothing but learn.

It's time for the left to re-embrace patriotism

Op-Ed

Yuvraj Shah *is a member of the class of 2026 and an Opinions Editor.*

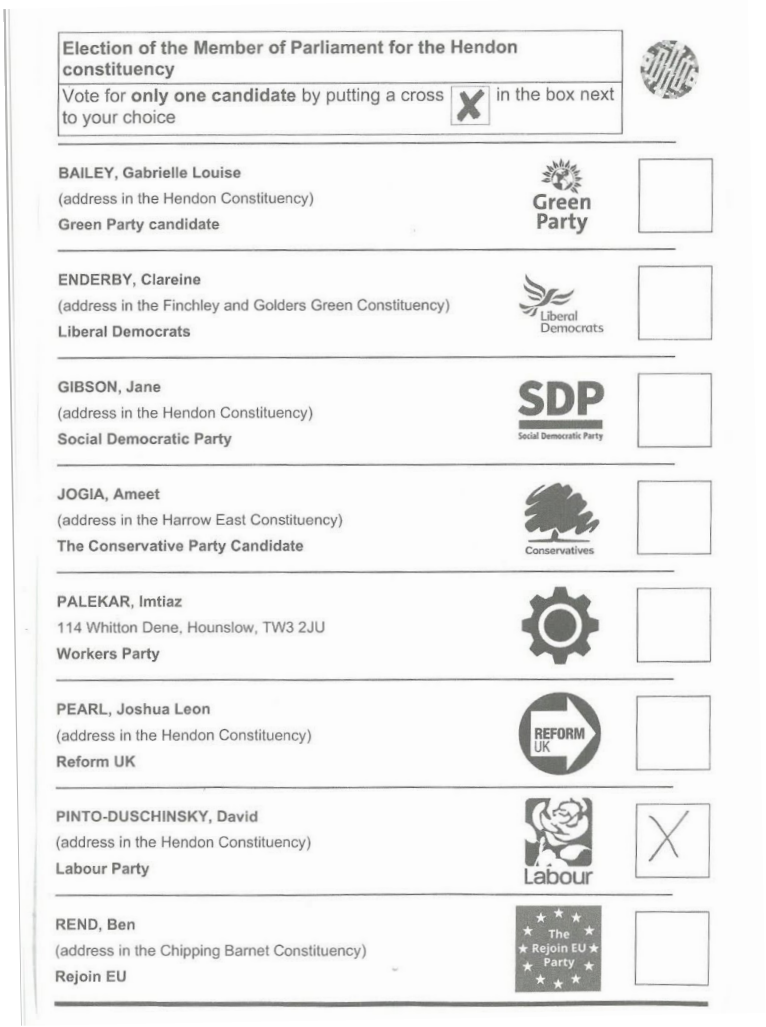
For those of us who are on the left of the political spectrum, patriotism tends to have a negative reputation. It is commonly associated with conservative thinking, nationalist policy and imperialist tendencies. Yet, I fiercely believe a patriotic society can, and must, co-exist with a liberal and forward-thinking population.

I was born in the United Kingdom, but my family and history can be traced to British East Africa (modern day Kenya) and the British Raj (modern day India). Naturally, growing up, many people I met on the left expected me to hold anger and distrust towards the United Kingdom. After all, it was the British who created the economic conditions in India that caused my community to migrate to East Africa. The same British created the conditions that saw my community then flee to the United Kingdom after East African independence. Given this history, most western leftists immediately disregard my dual patriotism for both Kenya and Britain, calling it a tool of neoliberalism and a false reality I have built for myself. But why can I not feel proud of the country that my grandparents and parents built a life in, a country that has protected and housed me, while also engaging authentically with British imperial history?

I hope to unpack why leftists cannot lose patriotism. We live in a world ordered and interpreted through borders and nations. Whether one likes it or not, it is our reality, and will likely remain our reality throughout our entire lives. There is a growing and alarming trend within leftist discussion to reject the nation-state as an important component of political life. As someone whose identity is deeply tied to the nation-state, I cannot do this.

In July 2024, the British public went to the polls to elect their fifth prime minister in the span of five years. Yet for many people, especially first-time voters like myself, this election felt different. The British Labour party — a centre-left party — had a genuine shot at victory. Keir Starmer, who now serves as Prime Minister, rebuilt a party which in 2019 won just 33% of the vote, its lowest share since 1933. Myself and many of my friends and family felt a genuine sense of change and excitement. There was a Labour party that not only could win, but bring desperately craved political stability to the U.K.

However, when I shared this excitement with some of my friends who are further left on the political spectrum than myself, I was met with a muted, and often unfortunate reaction. Starmer's Labour party is far from perfect, but it was rejected immediately by most of Britain's far left and student activist populations. Labour had become a new party. It was not the protest party that shamefully lost the election in 2019 — one I believe it could have easily won had then leader Jeremy Corbyn embraced patriotism — but a party with stable political clout. Starmer's Labour embraced British patriotism. It presented a future where Britons were proud of their island. A patriotic left can motivate its societies to strive to improve their countries by understanding why humans are naturally proud of where they came from. A patriotic left, like Britain's new Labour party, can win elections.



YUVRAJ SHAH/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

A ballot for the 2024 United Kingdom General Election that took place in July, in which the Labour Party won a majority in Parliament.

I am deeply proud of my British identity. My grandparents immigrated to Britain in 1965 with little to their name and forged a life for themselves. Four children and numerous grandchildren later, my family would not have been able to see the stability we now see without the British state. This July, I voted in the North London constituency of Hendon. Hendon returned a Labour MP to Parliament with a majority of just 15 votes. If just 15 leftists did not vote for Labour, rejecting their patriotism, and instead chose to vote for a single issue, albeit more leftist, party, Hendon would have flipped for the Tories. With enough protest votes, more than 50 seats like Hendon would have not flipped to Labour. If leftists cannot embrace British patriotism, Labour may not remain in government. Starmer may never have been able to bestow the British people with the gift of the Labour party.

Refusing to accept patriotism on the grounds of ideological purity brings me to another point: single issue parties. If the left can embrace patriotism, it can shield itself from fringe movements that seek to capitalise on short term issues to upset generational political trends. For example, Israel's war in Gaza, rightfully deemed a genocide by U.N. experts, did not influence my decision to vote for Labour this July. Leftists in Britain, a country with realistically very little influence on the genocide in Gaza, abandoned the Labour party over their non-committal stance on Gaza. Many of my friends on the left pressed me on my reason for voting for Labour while also maintaining my unwavering support for the Palestinian cause. The answer is simple: Labour is going to build affordable housing for the British youth. Single issue parties, like the Green Party of England and Wales, will not. An affordable housing boom in Britain is undoubtedly a liberal, and patriotic policy. Patriotism allowed me to see that the tragedy in Gaza would remain unchanged with or without a Labour government. Is it selfish for me to want to see British housing prices fall?

I now look at my other home, Kenya. Why do leftists reject patriotism when it is emulated from the west, but seem to allow it to exist when it emits from the global south? Patriotism should belong to everyone, especially the left. It is those of us on the left that have more hope for the future. Look at Kenya: patriotism was the vessel by which we fought for independence before 1963. We have to be realistic. We have to win elections. Patriotism is the only way we can do that. I am a Gujarati man of colour, born in north London and raised in Kenya. I am not native to either of my home countries. Despite this, I am deeply patriotic towards the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Kenya. If you are on the left like me, embrace patriotism.

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A WORLD IN FLUX: THE RELEVANCE OF JULIE

By OSCAR DE SWAAN ARONS
Contributing Writer

When I first encountered Julie (stylized "julie") almost a year ago, I was listening to "Catalogue." At that point it was just an unsuspecting single on a dreary evening walk back from Davis. Their "zoomergaze" sound, a sort of Tiktok-ified mix of shoegaze and grunge, had blipped on my radar a few times as more of a fleeting curiosity than a serious contender for my attention. "Catalogue," however, had me hooked. The track's delightful ability to switch between sour melancholy and heart-pounding euphoria exemplified the California trio's maturity, and I was eager to await their first full-length project.

Now, almost a full year later, it's here. "My Anti-Aircraft Friend" ("MAAF"), released on Sept. 13, illustrates that while Julie have not challenged their sonic blueprint much, they've expanded upon it greatly.

"MAAF" falls at what many music-site purists and industry veterans hope is the end of a shoegaze resurgence, one that has perhaps outstayed the initial spotlight of the genre. Their critique: The revival has aged like a teabag, and each cup is more watered down than the last — a sorry attempt at mimicry of the genre's pioneers, My Bloody Valentine, Slowdive and company.

I, myself, was having trouble believing that the trend would be broken by three friends, a bunch of early twenty-somethings originally united by their love for those same greats. Keyan Pourzand, Alex Brady and Dillon Lee met in high school. Their first release, "Flutter," went viral, racking up nearly 40 million listens and firmly placing them in the spotlight as a band to watch.

"Catalogue," the song that introduced me to the group, heads the album. At the peaks of the song, Brady's raw declaration "I don't feel anything now" becomes a visceral shibboleth, citing an emotional numbness that threads its way across the LP. In retrospect, my reservations about this current iteration of shoegaze might have been spurred from familiar tones being played to a tempo and energy more akin to punk and post-shoegaze bands like Whirr and Nothing. The opening track incorporates this unexpected mix that I now embrace with open arms.

The following track, "Tenebrist," is the album's angstiest. A twangy opening explodes into a frenetic verse, and Pourzand's first vocal contributions to the album highlight a relationship gone awry. He laments within a "smoke-filled room," a potential ode to the artistic style of tenebrism referenced in the tracks title, a contrast of light and dark emblematic of our subject's isolation. He continues, "you lost your head, you lost me now," which finalizes the tumultuous emotions on display in one of the album's most compelling songs.

Tracks three and four, "Very Little Effort" and "Clairborne Practice," continue the rhythmic onslaught through two standout performances from Lee on the drums. However, here also emerges one of the album's few weaknesses: lyrical thematic repetitions. Much of what is said on these two tracks could have just as well been used on "Tenebrist," but I will praise the introduction of Pourzand and Brady's joint vocals — the dichotomy of which furthers the relationship themes key to the album.

When "MAAF" was announced, I was ecstatic to hear that Julie would be working with producer Sonny Diperri, whose work on DIIV's "Deceiver" yielded one of my favorite albums of all time. I was curious whether the slower-paced gaze sound Diperri formulated on "Deceiver" would translate to this album. If it has, it is on tracks five and six, "Knob" and "Thread, Stitch." While the latter maintains its fair share of forceful moments, the larger part of this mid-album respite ebbs and flows slowly. Lines such as "could you believe your eyes? all you'd say is wake up and make your mind" arouse the regret of a late-night pandemic doom scroll — a wistful introspection bare in its honesty.

COURTESY PHOTO / JULIE
The album cover for Julie's latest record, "My Anti-Aircraft Friend", which was released on Sept. 13.

Track seven, "Feminine Adornments," is an early Autolux-esque percussive powerhouse and stands as one of the instrumental triumphs of "MAAF." The song is a reverberated mass of snow rolling down the slope to a furious resolution, taking plenty of unexpected turns along the way. Brady shines vocally and unabashed lyrics ("I'll come around, I'll defile") mark "Feminine Adornments" as our shoegazing chronicler's retaking of control.

Tracks eight and nine, "I'll Cook My Own Meals" and "Piano Instrumental," serve as less titillating reprisals of the album's already situated themes. Though the latter contains a surge that isn't found elsewhere on the LP and is sure to become one of the band's mosh classics.

"MAAF"'s last song, "Stuck in a Car with Angels," showcases Brady guiding listeners through a ballad that stands as a startling departure from the album's prevailing tone. In simple refrains, the album is concluded in masterful fashion. The final track is a testament to Julie's ability to grow and expand upon their sound.

As it stands, shoegaze isn't going anywhere, and why should it? The genre of perturbation and isolation is more relevant now than ever. With a world in tumult, who's more equipped to take the torch than a generation of artists whose early adolescence has been stained by social unrest, dopamine addictions and a pandemic. Julie have managed to harness this unease in a sonic journal with a degree of skill that should be respected and celebrated as a poignant reflection of our times.

"THE ART PIECE THAT WANDERS IN SPACE": A CONVERSATION WITH DARIO ROBLETO

By YUHAN ZHANG
Contributing Writer

If you were to send a message into the great expanse of the universe, what would it be? Artist, writer and filmmaker Dario Robleto seeks to expand on this question in his film, "Ancient Beacons Long for Notice" which is currently on display in the exhibit, "An Invitation to Awe" at the Middlebury College Museum of Art. On Oct. 15, Associate Professor of History of Art and Architecture and "An Invitation to Awe" curator Katy Smith Abbott and Robleto had an insightful conversation about Robleto's work and inspiration. The talk was sponsored by the Middlebury Museum of Art and History of Arts and Architecture department.

Based in Houston, Robleto's work is a dedicated exploration of the interaction between arts, humanity and science. In past years, Robleto has accrued an impressive resume, working as a research consultant to the popular science television series "Cosmos: Possible Worlds" in 2020, and serving as Artist-At-Large in Northwestern University's McCormick School of Engineering and the Block Museum of Art from 2018 to 2023. Currently, he is working on his first book, "The Heartbeat at the Edge of the Solar System: Science, Emotion, and Golden Record," co-authored with Harvard art historian Jennifer Roberts.

Robleto's film, "Ancient Beacons Long for Notice," is the third in a trilogy, and is centered on the Voyager Golden Records. In his talk, Robleto elaborated on the fascinating story behind the Golden Records, shared his perspective on the kinship between art and science and reflected on the concept of "the lost awe."

The conversation began with the story of the two Voyager spacecrafts launched by NASA in 1977. The Voyagers are space probes tasked with examining the edge of interstellar space.

"They transformed our understanding of the solar system, the place we called home," Robleto stated in the talk.

Robleto found one of the Voyager's missions particularly thought-provoking: in the hope that some outer space species may discover the Voyagers, scientists placed the Golden Records, a pair of identical phonograph records, onto the spacecraft. If properly interpreted, the Golden Records contain knowledge of almost everything about Earth and humanity through thoughtfully curated images, music, languages and natural sounds.

"For me, it was such a wonderful moment to reflect on because it was a rare moment where a scientific mission was issued in a poetic way, and that poetry came along with it," Robleto said. "It was not easy. It was filled with hurdles and pitfalls, but they did it. They were beautiful attempts at a very strange problem."

Robleto believes the member of the NASA team who helped create the Golden Records to be "one of the greatest artists that has not quite been acknowledged," and that the whole film and the conversation is dedicated to her. This person, Ann Druyan, the only non-scientist on the team, posed the question to the NASA members: "What about love?" In other words, she touched on the moral question of humanity and eternity by the thought of adding human experience at an emotional level into the Golden Record.

On a trip to the Library of Congress, Ann Druyan discovered a World War One record made by Will Geizberg, the first recording ever made on the battlefield. Will Geizber died while making this recording; he breathed in toxic gas in the frontline. Moved by this experience, Druyan added an hour-long recording of EEG and EKG of her body onto the Golden Records. While making this recording, she thought of love —she was recently engaged at the time — and war.

"This is the Golden Record on the Golden Records," said Robleto, "which made Golden Records one of the greatest arts that has never been recognized by art history."

Nicoletta Coupe '25 attended the talk and found Robleto's work to blend visual art with other disciplines in imaginative ways.

"I found it really interesting that Robleto works with physicists, anthropologists, mathematicians, etc — his practice both pays homage to the literal work of Ann and Carl Sagan (the Record) and reproduces their working philosophy by blending these disciplines," Coupe said in an interview with The Campus. "It feels so unlikely that, at the Golden Record's inception, the team of scientists thought to include a singular artist and unlikelier still that a young Robleto found her work."

Anny Druyan's story inspired Robleto to think about the link between art and science. His creative process began with a simple question: If the "aliens" do contact us, what do we say back?

"I have asked many scientists the question and the answers are always physics, math…is that all? What about arts and music, the history of our invented ways to love each other?" Robleto said. "I believe that artists should be involved…especially in the way of what we say back [to the creatures we have never seen]."

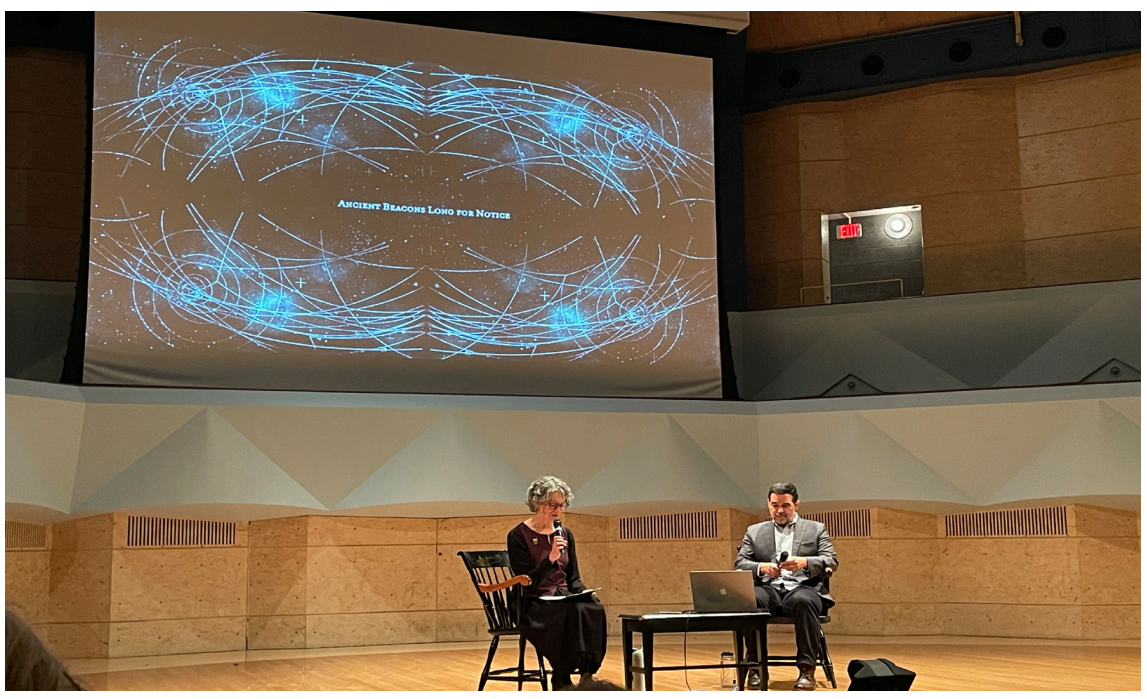
In an email to The Campus, Smith Abbott described how Robleto's film was a natural complement to the broader thematic structure of the "An Invitation to Awe" exhibit.

"The film is a natural complement to the scientific instruments in the Studio of Scientific Discovery, but it also has echoes in other parts of the exhibit: Acts of Humanity; Awe of the Tiny and Invisible (think of Ann Druyan's EEG and EKG recordings that were compressed into barely more than a minute); and certainly the awe of sound," Smith Abbott wrote.

Robleto finished the conversation between himself and Smith Abbott by making the following artist statement of the "lost awe." "As an artist, I don't want to forget that other thing that has happened [as awe] …that's something I think I will solve in the future."

Smith Abbott felt that, like Robleto's film, their conversation was germane to the exhibit as a whole.

"Dario's talk contributed to the exhibit in the same way his work does — by generating questions, getting us thinking, debating, re-examining what we thought we believed. He is a deeply thoughtful artist and writer and a wonderful collaborator," she wrote.



YUHAN ZHANG / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Katy Smith Abbott and Dario Robleto discuss the relationship of awe to science and art.

Chinese film "Only the River Flows" screens at the Hirschfield International Film Series

By WENDY WANG
Contributing Writer

The first feature-length film in the Hirschfield International Film Series, the Chinese atmospheric thriller "Only the River Flows," which premiered in the Official Selection of the Cannes Film Festival, was greeted warmly by a packed Dana Auditorium on Oct. 17.

Assistant Professor of Chinese Chialan Sharon Wang opened the event with an introduction to the background of the film. Based on esteemed Chinese novelist Yu Hua's short story "Mistakes by the River", the film takes place in a riverside town in rural China in the 1990s, where a series of murders unfold. The audiences follow principal character Ma Zhe (Zhu Yilong) as he attempts to uncover the truth behind the crimes.

The film, a neo-noir piece characterized by its shadowy cinematography, ambiguous morality and underlying theme of paranoia, was almost entirely shot on 16 mm film. The relatively dim, blurry, and blue-tinted image it captures recreated the atmosphere of the 1990s. "Only the River Knows," the original name of the film in English, directly implies that the truth behind the murders would flow with the river, drowning in the tides of time never to be uncovered.

At the beginning of the film, under the melancholy, ominous tunes of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata", Grandma Four, a widow who adopted a madman, is found dead by the river. Ma Zhe, the criminal police captain, is tasked with solving this peculiar murder. The trails lead him to unexpectedly uncover the secret romantic relationship between Wang Hong (Moxi Zishi) and Qian Lin (Baisha Liu). However, just as he seems to be closing in on the murderer, the truth slips through his fingers as his suspect, Hong, also dies by the river shortly afterward with Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" playing once more.

Ma then encounters the madman, now wearing bloodstained clothes, and captures him, sending him to an asylum. Later, his investigation reveals that one of the witnesses, Xu Liang, has a hidden life, dressing as a woman, which leads to Xu's suicide. The singular murder of Grandma Four escalates into a series of deaths: Wang Hong, Xu Liang and, in the end, a child.

Through his relentless pursuit of the truth, Ma seems to be inadvertently pushing the suspects and witnesses to death as he spills out unintended information, ruining their lives with his constant refusal to believe the madman is the true culprit behind the murders.

Tormented by the case, his wife's pregnancy and attendant fears of having a deficient child, Ma Zhe's mental state continues to deteriorate as the film puts its neo-noir quality on full display with reality becoming harder to distinguish from illusion. In one scene, Ma appears to shoot the madman in a temple, but the next day, it is revealed that he fired no shots — it was entirely a hallucination. Finally, Ma Zhe, disillusioned, plunges into the river. He encounters the madman onshore and, in a moment of madness, beats him to death with a rock. The film closes with Ma Zhe receiving his long-sought-after merit award and a final scene of him and his wife bathing their newborn child in an angelic light.

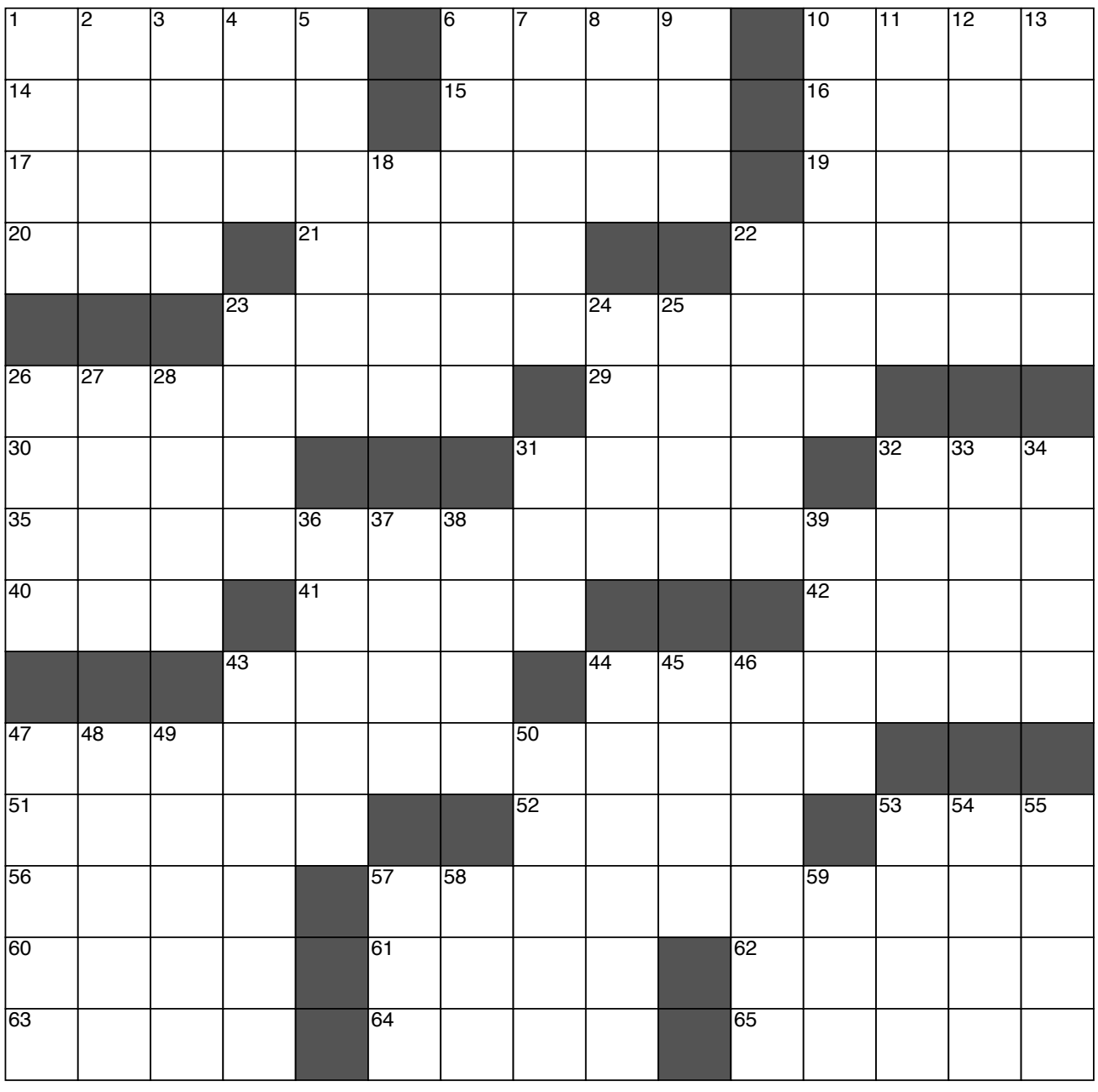
Despite not explicitly solving the mystery of the murder within the film, the movie was thoroughly enjoyable. Many audience members lingered to discuss the plot, piecing the narrative together with Professor Nikolina Dobreva. Points were raised on how the movie's purposeful erasure of the true narrative behind the murder and the frequent impasses of Ma Zhe's quest was symbolic of the journey of life with our constant fixation on truth. Another interesting motif is that of the madman; every character killed in the movie was either a marginalized or deviant figure in society. Even Ma Zhe's baby, playing with his striped towel, resembles the madman in his mannerisms. This pattern suggests that the oppressive, Kafkaesque bureaucratic system depicted in the film ultimately drives everyone into madness and eventually death.

Courtesy Photo / Hirschfield

"Only The River Flows" is a memorable piece. In the end, it was not only the river that flowed – our thoughts also flowed with the film's currents as we followed Ma Zhe through the film, reflecting on unresolved answers and elusive truths.

Try, Try Again

By Sam Merriam - Published on https://crosshare.org



ACROSS
1 French goodbye
6 Ajar
10 Trudge
14 Work
15 Apollo 11 org.
16 Capture
17 Office being chosen on 11/5
19 Yemen neighbor
20 Tennis unit
21 Connection point
22 Wine fruit
23 *Democrat nominee for 17-Across; with a win, she'd join the other starred clues who also tried and failed once before their big win
26 Irish comedian Conner
29 Simon ___ (copycat game)
30 Honolulu's island
31 Arnett or Ferrell
32 Pen juice
35 *Loser in 1796, winner in 1800 and 1804
40 Arts & crafts acronym
41 Tidy
42 German-based grocer
43 ___ Kong
44 Most risqué
47 *Loser in 1976, winner in 1980 and 1984
51 Fill with joy
52 Got a 100
53 Explosive palindrome
56 Location
57 *Loser in 1980, winner in 1988 (though his Junior won on attempt #1)
60 Bon ___ of Wisconsin
61 "Now it makes sense"
62 Metronome speed
63 Famous Scottish loch
64 Poker giveaway
65 Sour counterpart

DOWN
1 Swiss range
2 Truth or ___
3 "Oh, sure..."
4 Goddess of the dawn
5 Wall-mounted bathroom fixture
6 Eventually
7 Group of experts
8 Upper-left key
9 Vote against
10 UConn town
11 Rapper Kendrick
12 Giraffe relative
13 DNA parts
18 Capitol cap
22 King of morning TV
23 Supermodel Heidi
24 "In your dreams!"
25 50 percent
26 Fit check video
27 Half of a Hawaiian fish
28 Sailor's greeting
31 Soaked
32 Archipelago part
33 Silent approvals
34 Work with yarn
36 Little American lizard
37 Mail
38 NHL great Jaromir
39 Shower
43 Big critics
44 Actress McAdams
45 Stone or Bronze
46 West Point trainees
47 Sticky plant product
48 Martini addition
49 Bargatze and Silver, for two
50 Artist's stand
53 "Person of the Year" magazine
54 Director Peele's 2022 film
55 Horse's jog
57 Took the bait
58 Employ
59 Fresh

FOOTBALL BEATS TRINITY 24-21 IN HOMECOMING BATTLE

By BENJAMIN GREER
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Brian Moran '26 throws a pass during this weekend's game against Trinity.

This past Saturday, the football team (5–1) won their fifth game in a row in a narrow 24–21 victory over the undefeated Trinity College (5–1) in this year's homecoming game.

Middlebury scored first, halfway through the first quarter, on the back of a great passing drive by quarterback Brian Moran '26, who hit Patrick Jamin '25 and Ethan Vashel '25 for a couple of receptions to set up a 32-yard touchdown pass to tight end Liam High '24.5. The Bantams answered quickly, scoring two touchdowns of their own to end the quarter 14–7.

Each team scored a touchdown of their own in the second quarter, going back and forth in a tight matchup. Middlebury's offense continued to make progress in their air behind a season-high throwing performance of 313 yards and three touchdowns from Moran '26 and a breakout game of 104 yards from first-year wide receiver Jeremy Kiefer '28. Vashel '25 and Connor McClellan '28 had strong receiving and rushing games respectively, leading the Panther's offense.

Middlebury's defense also had a strong game, holding the Bantams to 350 total yards behind strong performances from Rocco Stola '25, Matt Shaw '27 and others. Middlebury was losing a close game 21-14 at the end of the first half, but the Panthers held a lot in store for the 1,250 anticipating fans.

The third quarter was a stout defensive battle, with Trinity threatening at the Middlebury 28-yard line before a great defensive play from Tómas Kenary '24.5 and Sean Link '24.5 forced a turnover on downs. The score remained the same after the third quarter, but kicker Zach Levy '25 cut the deficit to four with a field goal from the 20-yard-line to start the fourth quarter.

The defense held strong and forced a fumble on the next possession, igniting the homecoming crowd. The defenses continued to hold strong and force punts until around the two-minute mark, with the Panther's defense coming up clutch with a few game-saving stops.

Down by four, the Middlebury offense took the field down four, amid high tensions, with 2 minutes and 36 seconds left to go in the game. They gained about 25 yards to the Trinity 39 and had 1:07 on the clock when the Panthers took a timeout with fourth-and-one. They came out of the huddle with the perfect play drawn up and McClellan '28 was able to push the pile three yards for first down. With 30 seconds to go, Moran hit Jeremy Kiefer '28 with a 24-yard pass over the deep middle to set the Panthers up in the red zone, erupting the crowd. The audience now stood on their feet and Moran threw the ball to Mike Ahonen '26 on an ambitious back-shoulder pass with a single toe tap in the corner of the end zone to take the lead with 20 seconds to go.

The stands at Youngman Stadium went wild and the Bantams had a chance to strike back, but the Middlebury defense held strong, closing out the game in a 24-21 victory. The Panthers have now won five consecutive games.

The Panthers football team will look to extend their win streak in their next matchup against the next to last place Bates Bobcats (1–5) on Oct. 26.

PFL is back! After taking a week off, we are back and better than ever with an awesome episode. We recap the last two weeks of Midd sports, including TWO Nescac Players of the Week, a few come from behind wins, and a historic loss. We had two great guests on the show, Will Sawin '27 and Kyle Nilsson '25 from the undefeated men's soccer team. We broke down a few close ties they've had, their hopes for the rest of the season, and their soccer upbringings. To round out the show we did some exciting trivia and a Mount Rushmore of playground/recess activities. Thanks for listening!

PFL WEEKLY

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WOMEN'S TENNIS TEAM DEBUTS NEW FACILITIES

By JACK McGUIRE
Senior Sports Editor

On the weekend of Oct. 13, the women's tennis team debuted the school's new tennis facilities in a three day contest against Trinity, Colby and Skidmore.

The school broke ground on the new tennis facility this past summer, locating it between South Street Field and the school's outdoor track. The complex has 12 courts, an increase from the number of courts beside Proctor Dining Hall, and also helps the school clear space for the future student center, to be located where the Proctor tennis courts currently are. As part of the creation of the new tennis facility, the school moved the throwing areas for the track team.

"The new courts are awesome. Actually, we weren't expecting them to be done in the fall, but then [Middlebury Director of Athletics] Erin Quinn dropped the news that they were so that was really exciting," Nina Farhat '25 said. "We like them because we're near now a bunch of the rest of the athletics, so we have the soccer games going on. We can hear field hockey in the background. Proctor is kind of alone on its isolated hill."

The women's team had enormous success during their first formal competition on the new courts. In the mid-October matches, the team went a combined 30–2 in singles and doubles combined.

In singles, Farhat, Sahana Raman '25, Claudia Miller '25 and Elsie Van Wieren '28 each went 3–0 all in straight sets, giving Middlebury a 17–1 record in singles. In doubles, the duos of Miller and Van Wieren and Raman and Farhat both went undefeated.

The tournament marked a strong conclusion to the fall portion of the Panthers schedule. In the fall, the team had a combined record of 58–8 in singles and 34–5 in doubles. In September, a number of women's tennis players also performed well at the ITA Regionals hosted by Bowdoin College. Raman made it to the semifinals of the tournament while Farhat and Van Wieren were both quarterfinalists.

"The Fall went really, really well. We have three really cool freshmen that just joined our team, which added a bunch of really great positive energy," Farhat said. "So we're really excited about that, and overall, we ended up doing really great, which we were super excited about."

The team's early season success is a continuation of the team's success from last season. The team made it to the semifinals of the NESCAC tournament before a 5–4 lose to Amherst, and then made it to the quarterfinals of the NCAA tournament before a 5–3 loss to #1 ranked Claremont-Mudd-Scripps Colleges' consortium team.

The women's tennis team will resume their 2024-2025 season and continue to play on the new courts in March of next year.

Farhat expressed happiness at the rejuvenated energy of the team and is optimistic about what the spring will hold for the women's tennis team.

"This year we have three new freshmen. We also have an interim head coach this year, which is different from the head coach we had last year, so she brings a lot of really great energy, and she's been pushing us in many ways, on and off the court," Farhat said. "I think in the spring we'll be at full force and really excited to play."

COURTESY PHOTO / COLIN BOURQUE

Sahana Raman '25 hits a forehand at Middlebury's new tennis facility.

SEVEN QUESTIONS WITH CAROLINE HAGGERTY '24.5, FIELD HOCKEY

By TING CUI
Sports Editor

Caroline Haggerty '24.5, originally from Princeton, New Jersey is one of the most prolific members of the field hockey team. So far this season, Haggerty has six goals and four assists.

In this edition of Seven Questions, Haggerty discusses her favorite field hockey memories, her growth as a player, and why she chose Middlebury.

TC: How does the field hockey team plan to bounce back after the first loss of the season against Tufts this past Saturday?

CH: Saturday's loss was tough, but it really just presents us with a huge learning opportunity. The culture of our team focuses a lot on the idea of being where your feet are and taking a season one game at a time. So as we look ahead to the rest of the season. I think we're really just excited to dig in, get to work, and put together the best gameplay that we can.

TC: Now that you're a super senior, what are your favorite moments with the Middlebury field hockey team?

CH: There are so many little moments that it's hard to pick! It's going to seem a bit obvious, but each of our national championship games have been really awesome moments. They stand out to me not just for our performance on the field, but because they represented the culmination of our hard work in building the culture and camaraderie that sustained us throughout the season. Those are the things I'll remember most!

TC: How has your role on the team transformed or evolved from your first year to now as a super senior? What has been the biggest point of growth for you as a player?

CH: I've definitely had some role evolution! We talk a lot about a concept called "scope of contribution" - the idea that everyone on a team is playing an integral role, whether they're scoring a bunch of goals or celebratinglying as loud as they possibly can from the sideline. And that's something that I've held close to my heart during my career because I really have had to transform through those roles. The process of all of it has been incredibly rewarding, and through it all I really just had to grow a lot in my mental (not just physical) game to get my mindset each day to where it needed to be.

TC: How were you first introduced to field hockey, and what's been your journey to playing at the college level?

CH: I largely got introduced to it by it just being one of a few sports offered by my school in 7th grade. I was already playing ice hockey and I figured it would transfer well. It was funny though because I almost ended up not playing it at all — my twin sister was doing cross country instead and I was SO nervous to be doing a sport without her for the first time. But thankfully her and my mom convinced me to try it out!

As far as getting to the college level, I owe a lot of gratitude to my mom because she really acted like an advisor (and chauffeur as she likes to joke) to help me through the recruiting process!

TC: Why did you pick Middlebury? Was it more for the academics or the program—or a bit of both?

CH: It was a super holistic decision for me. I knew that I wanted to try to play field hockey in college and so I was going through the recruiting process, but it was equally (if not more) important to me to end up at a school where I would be happy with academics and extracurricularsacademically and extracurricularly. Middlebury ended up being a perfect combination of all of this, with a great liberal arts education, a beautiful outdoor setting, and a field hockey team with a strong culture that values having a good balance of fun and serious!

TC: How do you and your teammates unwind after a big game or during the off-season?

CH: After games, we each have our own individual ways of unwinding, but we do love to decompress by finding ways during the season to spend time together off the field. The simplest version of this is team dinners in the dining hall, but we also do fun and decompressing off-day activities like hiking the snowbowl, apple picking, or pumpkin carving at our coach's farm. These moments have honestly been some of my fondest from my time on the team - things like camping at the snow bowl with my grade or going to the Champlain Valley Fair this past preseason are memories that I'll definitely cherish for a long time.

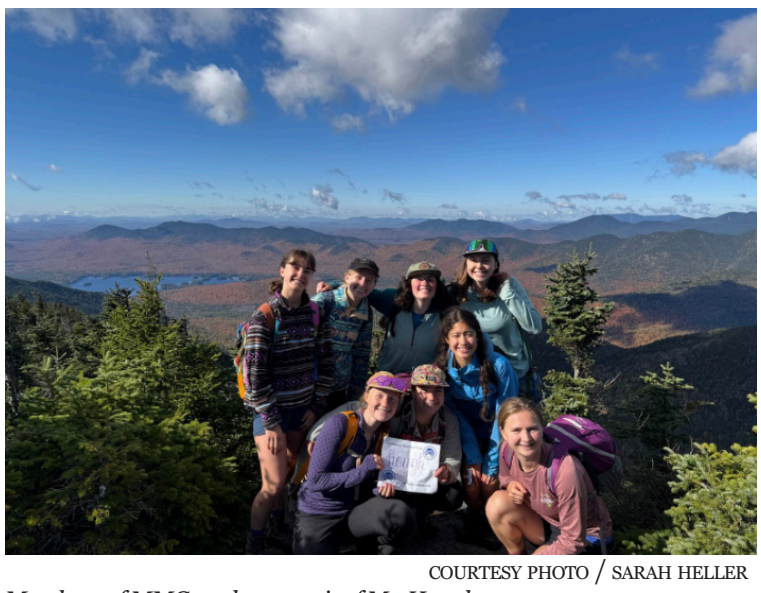
TC: Do you have any personal mantras or mottos that inspire or motivate you?

CH: Each year, we have a tradition where our seniors choose a team theme that functions as a motto/mantra and serves as a guiding post to support us in both our best and toughest moments. This year'syear's, "Make Waves", highlights how individual contributions unite to build momentum, driving a team toward success through consistency and collective strength. Throughout my years on the team, I've found a lot of value in using these themes as my own guidepost. And on a more individual level, I'm a big fan of using self-affirmations as personal mantras to maintain my mindset and confidence throughout the season!

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Caroline Haggerty '24.5 runs up the field in a game against Skidmore.

A DAY IN THE ADIRONDACKS:
MIDDLEBURY MOUNTAIN CLUB HOSTS INAUGURAL 46 PEAKS DAY



COURTESY PHOTO / SARAH HELLER
Members of MMC on the summit of Mt. Hough.

COURTESY PHOTO / BERNADETTE OSBORN

By SIMON SCHMIEDER
Contributing Writer

As we headed west on Vermont Route 125, the sun was still yet to fully rise. A layer of fog shrouded much of the landscape, so dense and defined you felt you could almost grab it. Minutes later, rays of sun bathed the valleys and farm fields in sleepy hues of orange and yellow. The fog reluctantly lifted, and soon I had truly woken up.

Some, however, had long been awake. Rising at 3:15 a.m., leaving campus a little after 4 a.m., and arriving by 5:15 a.m., they were hours ahead on their trips, already several miles deep into the Adirondack wilderness. Before I even ate my to-go container breakfast in the dark, the opening stages of Middlebury Mountain Club's (MMC) inaugural 46 Peaks Day were well underway.

What exactly is "46 Peaks Day"? Why were people waking up at such heinous hours? In short, 46 Peaks Day is a challenge in which members of a club or group attempt to summit at least one of the 46 high peaks in the Adirondack Mountains, with the overall goal of the group's participants having collectively climbed all of the peaks by the end of the day.

This was MMC's first ever attempt at the challenge. The idea to complete it gained momentum last spring when the club received a suggestion for a 46 Peaks Day in their end-of-year feedback form. MCC President Will Hinkle '26 had previously heard about the event from another regional college. Thus, on Oct. 5, Middlebury finally took it on.

In the week leading up to 46 Peaks Day, prospective hikers signed up for their trips through a Google form. MMC led six of these trips, designating a variety of day and overnight hikes for which registration was done separately. Outside of these six, however, students were given free rein in choosing which peak to tackle, and with whom to do the tackling. I registered for Sawteeth Mountain with Bernadette Osborn '26.5, another MMC board member.

Entering the High Peaks region of the Adirondacks, one drives straight towards a wall of mountain before going deeper into the forest and away from the string of small towns. The trees grow taller and denser, the air gets a little cooler, and the roads begin contouring to the surrounding landscape. Heading west on Tracy Road (a heaven on earth for anyone who enjoys backroads driving), it was soon clear that our club was not the only group with hiking in mind that morning.

Dozens of cars, some over one mile from the closest trailhead, lined the sides of the roads. Large groups of hikers traveled single file, hugging the guardrail as they trudged to their routes. In fact, the Middlebury group that had arrived at 5:15 a.m. was still too late to beat the crowds, adding four miles to their hike just to make it to the trailhead from their parking spot. That same group ultimately walked twenty miles on Saturday, summiting Lower Wolfjaw, Upper Wolfjaw, Armstrong and Gothics — and traversing the shoulder of some roads along the way.

Bernadette and I were a bit luckier. Using a guest pass from a friend, we parked by the clubhouse of the Adirondack Mountain Reserve (AMR), which owns considerable property in the mountain range. The route for Sawteeth started right at the ornate wooden gate of the AMR, and at around 8:15 a.m., we set off on Lake Road and began our hike.

Lake Road continued for roughly three miles, a gravel road lined by trees and falling leaves that ran parallel to a small brook. The road ended by the incredible Lower Ausable Lake, and soon we began our ascent of Sawteeth. We took the scenic route trail on the way up, which wrapped around the lake for a while before sharply climbing for the last few miles.

We shimmied between massive boulders by the shoreline, climbed ladders up the vertical sections of the trail and scrambled over moss-blanketed rocks. Four miles into the ascent, we were perched high above the water and could gaze down at the lake snaking between the tumbling cliffs of the mountains.

The climbing continued. The lichen multiplied and the air took on a damp coolness. The palette of shifting reds, yellows, and oranges gave way to uniform tones of dark green. The incline began to waver, and right as we both began to consider putting on another layer, the summit appeared before us. We arrived at a patch of rocky ground in a clearing among the trees, and from here looked out towards the highest peaks of the Adirondacks.

Several other groups summited around the same time. As we ate our lunch, we even heard shouts of celebration coming across the valley. With the bustle of the morning, the hikers we passed along the way and the distant echoes of other groups, there was this tangible energy in the Adirondacks that day. The mountains felt alive.

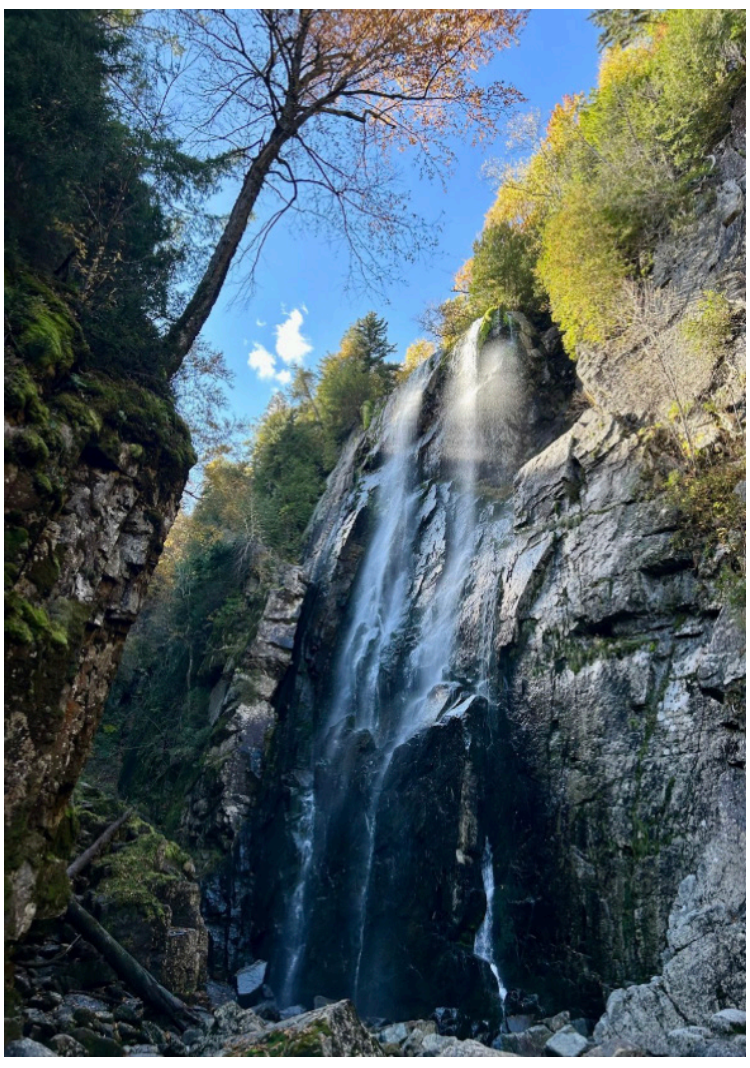
We descended along a different trail, eventually passing Rainbow Falls right before we came back to the shoreline of Lower Ausable Lake. The afternoon sun glistened through the mist of the waterfall; there was a special awe we felt standing by its base, looking up at the towering cliffs and bright colored trees stretching out above.

Before making our return trip on the road, we took a dip in the lake. It was just warm enough that the chill of the water seemed worth it, yet as I jumped in, I was entirely unprepared for how cold I was about to feel. Frigid even compared to the Gorge in late fall, neither of us stayed in the water long. We scurried back onto land and recovered in the sun, before ultimately setting back out on Lake Road towards the trailhead. In the end we hiked a little over twelve miles, and although the exhaustion took a while to hit, when it did, it hit hard. By the time we got to Proctor, we had both gone nonverbal.

Talking with the MMC board about 46 Peaks Day a few days later, there was a sense of pride and accomplishment about the event. Hinkle further added that the "outdoor experience meant a lot for the people involved."

Although Middlebury's hikers had only reached the summits of roughly thirty of the peaks, the interest, participation and energy were high for the club's first ever attempt at the challenge. Despite the messy parking (one group walked 28 miles) and the occasional route error, MMC's 46 Peaks Day was an overall success. It was a success not only for all who tackled their hikes, but also an unquestionably positive sign for the years to come and MMC's future attempts at the challenge.

COURTESY PHOTO / BERNADETTE OSBORN
Lake Road, which leads out to the trailhead of Sawteeth Mountain.



COURTESY PHOTO / BERNADETTE OSBORN
Morning light reflecting through the mist of Rainbow Falls.

COURTESY PHOTO / LILY WEISSMAN
Autumn foliage unfurling across the Adirondack Range, with the sunrise underway in the distance.